

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 669

By Briley

A RESOLUTION to recognize Ashley Wiltshire on the occasion of his retirement.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should honor those citizens who have performed with uncommon devotion and enthusiasm throughout their years of public service through the law; and

WHEREAS, Ashley Wiltshire is one such estimable person, a beloved leader who has served with distinction for thirty-seven years with the Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland, thirty-one of those years having been spent as its executive director; and

WHEREAS, he will take a much deserved retirement effective June 30, 2007; and

WHEREAS, conveying unwavering honesty, morality, nobility, and dependability at all times, Mr. Wiltshire has committed his entire professional life to the Legal Aid Society's mission of seeking equal justice for low-income people in civil cases; he has approved the pursuit of credible legal actions on behalf of clients in need, even when political and/or financial fallout for the organization was likely; and

WHEREAS, a native of Richmond, Virginia, Ashley Wiltshire received his bachelor's degree from Washington and Lee University; he is also a 1972 graduate of the Vanderbilt University School of Law; and

WHEREAS, before attending law school he earned a Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York, where he became involved in the civil rights movement, and taught in Bangkok, Thailand; from 1988 to 1995, he was a lecturer on law and religion at the Divinity School, Vanderbilt University; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wiltshire began working with the Legal Aid Society in Nashville as a law clerk in 1970; he joined the staff as a Reginald Heber Smith Fellow in 1972, became managing attorney of the Family Law Section in 1974, and was appointed executive director in 1976; and

WHEREAS, throughout his years of exemplary service and leadership at the Legal Aid Society, which has one of the largest per capita private bar campaigns, Ashley Wiltshire has led the organization in a way that focuses on clients first, staff and volunteers second, and himself last; he has consistently given credit to others and faithfully provided positive feedback and encouragement for victories and good efforts; and

WHEREAS, by creating a culture of respect, trust, flexibility, and concern, Mr. Wiltshire has skillfully managed eighty-nine staff members in eight offices that serve forty-eight counties; he remains calm and professional at all times, encourages healthy debate, new ideas, and open discussion, and generates a sense of security for his staff, while keeping everyone focused on the Legal Aid Society's mission; and

WHEREAS, under Mr. Wiltshire's astute leadership, the Legal Aid Society entered into a partnership with the Nashville Bar Association to jointly establish the Nashville Pro Bono Program; in 2006, the program attracted 665 volunteer attorneys who provided legal services in 1,214 cases; and

WHEREAS, the Nashville legal community, with Ashley Wiltshire's input, has long led the nation in its financial support for its local Legal Services Corporation (LSC) program; the Legal Aid Society administers the bar's pro bono program in a seamless integration of federally funded and privately donated legal services; and

WHEREAS, Ashley Wiltshire was one of the first legal services executives to hire a development director, and he has since added a full-time grant writer position and expanded the previously Nashville-centered campaign to all forty-eight counties served; he is an excellent steward of the funds entrusted to the Legal Aid Society and his frugal approach is almost legendary; and

WHEREAS, over the years, Mr. Wiltshire, an effective and passionate spokesperson for the Legal Aid Society, has been able to move the legal community from skepticism about the Legal Aid Society's mission to generous support and partnership in enlarging access to justice for all; and

WHEREAS, in 1996, when changes in federal legislation prohibited the Legal Aid Society from continuing to represent people in class action lawsuits or to engage in lobbying for

improvement in the law, Mr. Wiltshire helped those prongs of the mission survive through the foundation of the Tennessee Justice Center (TJC); and

WHEREAS, he has played a vital role in transforming Tennessee's legal culture, making LSC programs, the judiciary, and the bar full partners in improving access to justice; placing emphasis on professionalism and client service, Mr. Wiltshire is a model of the "servant leader," always nurturing and supporting Legal Aid Society staff and thus enabling the Legal Aid Society to earn a reputation for the excellence of its advocacy; and

WHEREAS, during Mr. Wiltshire's illustrious tenure, Legal Aid Society advocacy has dramatically affected family law in Tennessee, consumer and housing law, and the administration of the Social Security Disability Benefits program; and

WHEREAS, in this past year alone under Mr. Wiltshire's able tutelage, the Legal Aid Society provided legal assistance to 7,866 low-income people, increased requests for assistance by 21.6 percent, distributed 106,163 free hard copies of legal self-help materials, increased the number of attorneys volunteering for the pro bono program by forty-three percent over the prior year, and raised \$685,908 through the 2006 annual campaign, a six percent increase over the 2005 campaign; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to accolades, Mr. Wiltshire received the national Reginald Heber Smith Award in 1981, and is a Fellow of the Nashville Bar Association and the Tennessee Bar Foundation; he is also the 2007 recipient of CommunityNashville's Human Relations Award and has been nominated for both the 2007 Dorsey Award and the 2007 ANE Chief Executive Officer of the Year Award; and

WHEREAS, his many professional accomplishments aside, Ashley Wiltshire is fortunate to share both love and companionship with his wife, Susan, and their two children, Matthew, an investment banker, and Carrie, an attorney; the Wiltshires raise cattle on a farm in Houston County; and

WHEREAS, Ashley Wiltshire has brought a unique combination of selflessness and visionary management to his role as executive director of Legal Aid Society; and

WHEREAS, as Mr. Wiltshire approaches retirement, the cause that he has so ably and so passionately championed for thirty-seven years is left in the hands of a vibrant organization that could not have been built without him; and

WHEREAS, throughout his estimable career, Ashley Wiltshire has demonstrated the utmost professionalism, ability, and integrity, winning the unbridled respect and admiration of thousands of grateful clients, his colleagues and employees, and indeed, the entire Nashville legal community; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we extend to Mr. Ashley Wiltshire our heartfelt wishes for a happy and fulfilling retirement and every continued success in his future endeavors, as we honor his singular contributions to the Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland during a thirty-seven-year career distinguished by dedication and humanity.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.